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## ***Here at Home and Over There***

### **Horrors of War**

What was old?	What was new?

### **Black Yankee**

What was old?	What was new?

### **Marine Flyer in France**

What was old?	What was new?

### **Army Nurse Corps**

What was old?	What was new?

### **To the Women of the US**

What was old?	What was new?



# Horrors of War: Charles D. Dermody Sr.

*The instant we started climbing out to the trench, the artillery cut loose on the Germans. At the same instance the Germans cut loose with artillery and machine guns.*



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Photos of the Great War Web Site

*Immediately men began to drop. Cries and moans, yells and screams rent the air, and could be heard even above the roaring of the cannon and bursting shells of the enemy. Shells were bursting over head and underfoot. The very air was exploding in our faces. The ground was moving, rolling under our feet. Enemy machine gun bullets were tearing through our soldiers like so much hail*

*and taking a great toll. It was a roaring furnace, all fire, smoke, hot lead, and shrapnel in which it seemed we were all trapped and must perish, but some of us went on and on.*

*I do not believe there was a man who went over the top that morning who did not pray and pray aloud. I did and every man I passed, or who passed me, was doing so. Some did not know how to pray before, but God in his pity gave them the knowledge then.*

*A large swamp lay between our lines and the Germans. In order to get us across this our engineers had built some walks under cover of the night. We soon*



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found that crossing on these was much too slow and as we were losing troops heavily, Captain McCormack, our company commander, took the lead and plunged into the swamp. We all followed, holding our rifles over our heads. Breaking through the scum and water up to our armpits, we crossed the swamp.

On the other side, the ground was marshy and would not hold our weight. Unless we could step on a bunch of swamp grass, we were continually pulling each other out of the mire. This condition of the ground saved a lot of men from getting hit by shrapnel. As the shells hit her, although their detonation was instantaneous, they would bury in the mud and then explode. We got through the marsh, then came the German wire entanglement. We walked on top of the wires instead of trying to wade through, but a lot of us broke through several times and got entangled. It was tough going. Soldiers everywhere were tearing their clothes in frantic efforts to extricate themselves and get to the trench and at the Germans.

We gained the trench, captured Germans—guns, ammo, and all—then swept on to our objective. It had taken six hours. The boys on our left were meeting with more resistance and did not reach their objective until sometime later and then only after reinforcements.



Photos of the Great War Web Site

family from *A Yank in the First World War* by Charles D. Dermody Sr. The Doughboy Center.



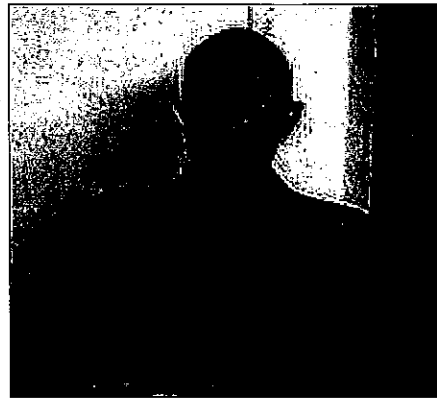
National Archives

We dug in on the crest of a hill on the edge of a woods where the Germans continually bombarded us with whiz bangs. We promptly named the place Whiz-bang Woods. We held this position for several days, then just prior to our next drive we were taken back a short distance to get ready to go again.

Excerpted with the kind permission of Kathleen Dermody Seaton and the Dermody

## Black Yankee: Thomas Davis, First World War Veteran

A refined and proud gentleman, Thomas Davis was born November 30, 1892, in Shelbina, Missouri. He worked on a family farm and then with the railroad. When America became embroiled in the War To End Wars, he was drafted into the army in St. Paul, Minnesota.



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Training camps in the army, like much of society at that time, were segregated. So, Thomas Davis was shipped off to an all black training facility at Fort Dodge near Des Moines, Iowa. Fort Dodge was also the site of the only training school for black officers in the US Army. Although many hundred black officers were commissioned here, army regulations restricted them from commanding white troops.

In August 1918, Davis' unit sailed from New York on the ship named President Grant. Thomas Davis found the crossing to be pure hell. This was the peak of the vicious Swine Flu epidemic, which devastated combatants and home-front civilians across the globe. Of the 5,000 troops aboard the President Grant, half had been stricken ill. Davis described that, "When I went over to France, the flu broke out so bad on that ship, and many men died,... So many, in fact, that we had to bury at sea."



Photos of the Great War Web Site

After fourteen days at sea the ship finally arrived in St. Nazaire, France. As his first duty in France, Davis was one of seventy-five men picked for the difficult task of unloading the bodies of those who died of Swine Flu.

Thomas Davis served in an all black unit, the 809th Pioneer Infantry. The

segregationist policies rampant then in America prevented troops of different races from being in the same unit. Additionally, black units were generally prevented from participating directly in combat. The vast majority of black recruits worked in labor battalions in the Service of Supply. St. Nazaire, situated on the Atlantic coast of France, was a main port for incoming American troops.



Photos of the Great War Web Site

Much infrastructure construction was needed in and around this area, so the 809th Pioneers went to work. They built several hospitals for the wounded American troops. Davis noted that they could very quickly erect the buildings because, "They were all pre-numbered pieces, taken off the ship in sections and put right up."

Although not experiencing the same hardships as men in the trenches, there was grueling work and shortages of supplies. At one remote site his unit worked for ten days without any resupply of food—living only on beans, some cornbread, and a little bacon. Generally, they had little free time. When they did, they played cards or read the belated mail from home.

The Great War ended on November 11, 1918. The men in Davis' unit were not allowed to get anything with which to celebrate. A much smaller ship brought the troops of the 809th back across a stormy Atlantic Ocean to the US. They arrived in New York harbor greeted by a small celebration. Davis said he was very happy to be home.

Despite the level of segregation and the Jim Crow laws that existed, Thomas Davis said, "Oh, things were much better after the war, much better. Well, now, when you'd go into a restaurant ... they'd serve you."

Thomas Davis has lived through a century of profound changes in America and the world. He is pleased with how far America has come, but believes that there is much more to overcome. "Black Yankees, that's what the French people called us...and I thought it was funny since most of us were from the South, but the name seemed to catch on, YANKEES."

*Excerpted from An Interview with Thomas Davis, First World War Veteran  
by Jane and Eric Lawson. The Doughboy Center*



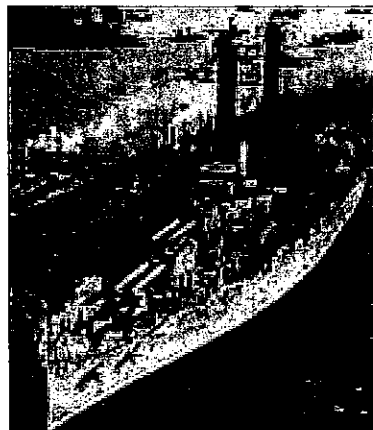
Doughboy Center Web Site

## Marine Flyer in France: Captain Alfred A. Cunningham

*Saturday, November 10, 1917 (On a ship bound for England)*

*S.S. "St. Paul," In War Zone.*

*Our first day in the submarine danger zone is over safely, but it was one of the most strenuous days I have passed. I went on watch at 5 a.m. Twilight is the most dangerous time of the day and everyone is extremely alert then. I stayed on watch until 10 a.m., went back on at 2 p.m. and stayed until after evening twilight. This looking for submarines is the most nerve straining duty I ever did. You must see them first, and, as their periscope is very small, the Odds are against you. You feel that the slightest negligence on your part might lose the ship and all on board. I freely strained my eyesight while on watch today. I am confident that I saw the periscope of a submarine today, but, as it did not reappear I might have been mistaken. The ten minutes after I saw it were anxious ones. We met our convoy of two U.S. destroyers (Conyngham and Jacob Jones) at 4 p.m. and were much relieved to see them. Their designs looked good to us, even if they were camouflaged to the limit. We were glad to see them, not so much for the slight additional protection they give as to the fact that if we are sunk, they will pick us up from the lifeboats. No merchant vessel is allowed to stop to pick up survivors of a torpedo ship. Without the destroyers we would have to drift around in lifeboats until some passing destroyer found us. I personally have no desire to drift around the North Atlantic in an open boat for several days this time of the year. On the last trip this ship passed twelve lifeboats full of people from a torpedo ship and could not stop to pick them up. They were found two days later by a destroyer. We passed some wreckage this afternoon but could not make out just what it was. I have had a most strenuous day and am all worn out.*



Photos of the Great War Web Site

*Monday, December 17, 1917*

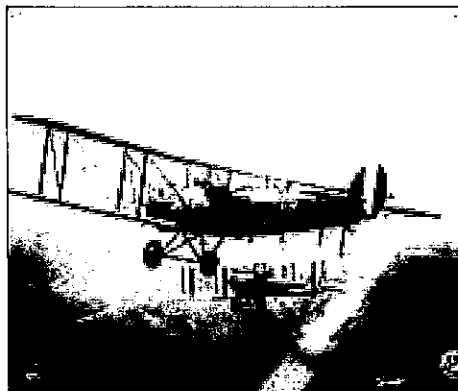
*Front of 4th French Army*

*Got up frozen stiff and left after breakfast in a staff car for the 13th Groupe of combat machines. They are just behind the line of balloons with hangars around the edge of a wood. The Groupe is composed of the 65<sup>th</sup>, 85<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 124<sup>th</sup> Escadrilles. The 124<sup>th</sup> is the LaFayette Escadrille at LaCheppe. The others are at La Noblette. Saw quite a lot of the LaFayette pilots. The pilots live in huts of rough*



boards and the wind whistles through with little obstruction. Can't describe anything as my hands are numb with cold. There is a line of old trenches on side of field which soldiers off duty use in practice drills. These poor soldiers are really pitiful and are thoroughly sick of the war.

Just in front of us are the line of sausage balloons. They look queer hanging up there. It cleared up in the afternoon and I saw very interesting sights of antiaircraft shells bursting around our machines. Two or three boches came out and I saw our pilots go for them. It was certainly pretty but the boches all got away. It is so cold I can hardly write. At dark two of our pilots had not returned and we were uneasy about them. At 8 p.m. we called up the advanced artillery and they said the last they saw of them they were in German territory fighting three boches. We were worried until one came in on foot at 9 p.m. and said they had gotten lost and landed several miles away and walked to camp. At night I noticed the artillery more. It sounded like a pitched battle to me but it is just the ordinary thing. Too cold to write more.



Photos of the Great War Web Site

#### **Tuesday, December 18, 1917, Same Locality**

Got up frozen stiff. The weather fairly clear. Persuaded a French pilot of a biplane fighting Spad to take me over the lines. We went up like an elevator and talk about speed! We were over the lines in no time and I was all eyes. The archies bursting near us worried me some and made it hard to look all the time for boches. I saw something to one side that looked like a fountain of red ink. Found it was the machine gun tracer bullets from the ground. After a few minutes we sighted a boche two seater just below us. We made for him. It was the finest excitement I ever had. I got my machine gun ready. Before we got to him he dived and headed for home. On one of our rolls I let loose a couple of strings of six at him but it was too far for good shooting. After following him a ways over the lines we turned to look for another. None were out so we came home. Finest trip I ever had. If the boche had not turned quite so soon, I think I might have got him. Watched pilots doing stunts in afternoon. At about 8 p.m. we were huddled around a small fire in the hut when we heard three boche machines fly over very low. Two of them did not locate our place and went on. We went outside and saw the other one flying around trying to locate the hangars so we made for the machine gun pit. He finally flew down the line and let go a couple of bombs, as he came over we opened on him but the gun jammed and no one could fix it in the dark. He made three trips and let go two bombs each trip. Then he left us. We found he had dropped them all in the woods and no machines were hurt. We went back and tried to sleep but every time a big gun would go off I thought it was another raid. I am writing this Wednesday night with my hands blue from cold. There is certainly no lack of excitement around here.

*Excerpted from The Diary of Captain Alfred A. Cunningham*

# Army Nurse Corps: Helen C. Burrey American Red Cross



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*During the drive at Chateau-Thierry a great number of the hospital trains were mobilized at Pantin, a suburb of Paris, for duty into Chateau-Thierry. From Paris to Chateau Thierry was about three hours ride and 27 [US Army Base Hospital No. 27] was ordered to make the trip. The train was sent to evacuate patients from hospital No. 7, a mobile unit. These patients had received First Aid; major operations were cared for. Some had hardly reacted from their anesthetic and most of them were in a pitiable state.*

*In the station and surrounding it were litters covered with boys; mud-splattered and torn were the uniforms they wore.*

*They were patiently waiting to be taken, they did not care where but some place where they could be given proper care. After we received our train load, about 400 patients, one of the things that bothered both patients and nurses were the countless numbers of flies that infested our train. The odors from the wounds that had no care cannot be described but shall live in the memory of the nurses and orderlies. We made three trips to Chateau-Thierry. The third one was to a small town outside Chateau-Thierry.*



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*It was after dark when we got there*

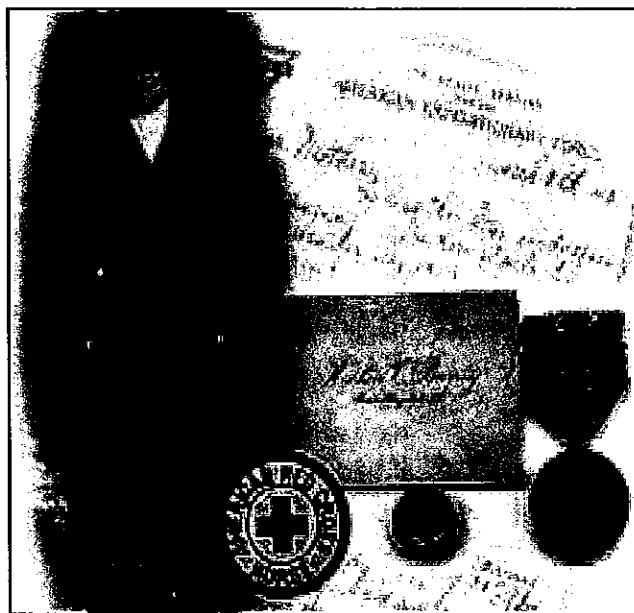
*and we*



Photos of the Great War Web Site

*immediately started to load our train with patients that had been gassed. At the height of our work, we had an alarm of the enemy airplanes which meant all lights out and we had to work in the dark getting as many patients under shelter as possible. We loaded our train without keeping count of the patients that could walk.*

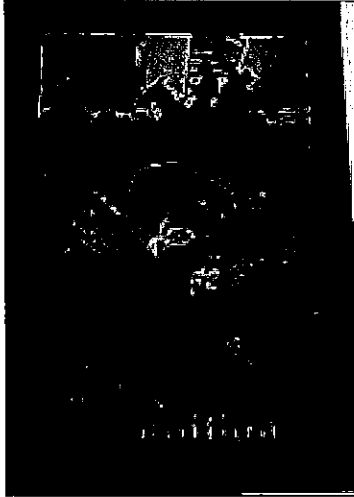
*After the train pulled out and we got to a place of safety, the lights were turned on and we found we had patients everywhere, in the berths, on the seats, and crowded in the aisle.*



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Excerpted from *My Mother's War- Mementos of WWI*,  
with kind permission from Mary Murphy, The Doughboy Center

# To the Women of the US: A Plea from the Department of Agriculture



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*The President said "Every housewife who practices strict economy puts herself in the ranks of those who serve the nation." As early as May 5, 1917, Secretary Houston of the United States Department of Agriculture, foreseeing the importance of women's share in the nation's task, issued the following appeal:*

To the Women of the United States:

Every woman can render important service to the Nation in its present emergency. She need not leave her home or abandon her home duties to help the armed forces. She can help to feed and clothe our armies and help to supply food to those beyond the seas by practicing effective thrift in her own household.

Every ounce of food the housewife saves from being wasted in her home—all food which she or her children produce in the garden and can or preserve, every garment which care and skilled repair make it unnecessary to replace—all lessen that household's draft on the already insufficient world supplies.

To save food the housewife must learn to plan economical and properly balanced meals, which, while nourishing each member of the family properly, do not encourage overeating or offer excessive and wasteful variety. It is her duty to use all effective methods to protect food from spoilage by heat, dirt, mice or insects. She must acquire the culinary ability to utilize every bit of edible food that comes into her home. She must learn to use such foods as vegetables, beans, peas, and milk products as partial substitutes for meat. She must make it her business to see that nothing nutritious is thrown away or allowed to be wasted.



Trenches on the Web:  
Posters of the Great War



Trenches on the Web:  
Posters of the Great War

Waste in any individual household may seem to be insignificant, but if only a single ounce of edible food, on the average, is allowed to spoil or be thrown away in each of our 20,000,000 homes, over 1,300,000 pounds of material would be wasted each day. It takes the fruit of many acres and the work of many people to raise, prepare and distribute 464,000,000 pounds of food a year. Every ounce of food thrown away, therefore, tends also to waste the work of an army of busy citizens.

Clothing is largely an agricultural product and represents the results of labor on the sheep ranges, in cotton fields and in mills and factories. Whenever a useful garment is needlessly discarded, material needed to keep some one warm or dry may be consumed merely to gratify a passing fancy. Women

would do well to look upon clothing at this time more particularly from the utilitarian point of view.

Leather, too, is scarce, and the proper shoeing of armies calls for great supplies of this material. There are only so many pairs of shoes in each hide, and there is a shortage of animals for leather as well as for meat. Anything that can be done to encourage adults or children to take care of their shoes and make them last longer, means that so much more leather is made available for other purposes.

Employed women, especially those engaged in the manufacture of food or clothing, also directly serve their country and should put into their tasks the enthusiasm and energy the importance of their product warrants.

While all honor is due to the women who leave their homes to nurse and care for those wounded in battle, no woman should feel that because she does not wear a nurse's uniform she is absolved from patriotic service. The home women of the country, if they will give their minds fully to this vital subject of food conservation and train themselves in household thrift, can make of the housewife apron a uniform of national significance.

Demonstrate thrift in your homes and encourage thrift among your neighbors. Make saving rather than spending your social standard.

Make economy fashionable lest it become obligatory.



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